DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 155 517 CG 012 458

AUTHOR McKnight, Richard
TITLE All Values Are Equal, But Some Are More Equal Than Others: A Critique and Redefinition of Values Clarification. Monograph Series No. 102 Code C-9.
PUB DATE 77
NOTE 35p.; Published by the Center for the Study of Psychoeducational Processes, Temple University

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Cognitive Processes; Counseling; *Developmental Psychology; *Ethical Instruction; Individual Psychology; Literature Reviews; *Moral Development; Personality Development; *Psychoeducational Processes; *Values
IDENTIFIERS *Values Clarification

ABSTRACT

This literature review presents the essentials of the theory of Values Clarification and its fundamental terms, and makes a critical analysis of the Values Clarification Theory of Valuation. (Author/JLL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED155517

All Values Are Equal, But Some Are More Equal Than Others: A Critique and Redefinition of Values Clarification

By Richard McKnight

The Center for the Study of Psychoeducational Processes

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

M.F. Klein -- co-editor PEP Center

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

MONOGRAPH SERIES NUMBER 102 CODE C-9

CG012458

Copyright 1977 by Richard McKnight

Published by the Center for the Study of Psychoeducational Processes Monograph Series.

Editors	Steven Krupp Deborah Levi
Editorial Staff	Libby Anderson Effie Bastas Larry Krafft Steven Meisel Melvin Silberman
Clerical Staff	Maxine Sullivan

The Center for the Study of Psychoeducational Processes provides Consultation, Educational and Research Services, and coordinates professional development activities for the Department of Psychoeducational Processes, Temple University.

Co-Directors	Larry Krafft Richard McKnight

I. INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 1976, the results of the most recent Gallup poll on American education revealed that 79% of those surveyed favored "instruction in the schools that would deal with morals and moral behavior (Woodward & Lord, 1976, p. 74)." This statistic is interesting in that there is not likely to be wide acceptance of just what moral issues are to be appropriately addressed in the schools or the means of doing so. Indeed, this statistic squares badly with the "back to basics" thrust in American schools which seems to promote few values beyond those of good, hard work.

This state of affairs, and the increasing social awareness of a variety of racial, ethnic, and sexual minorities encourages the prediction that great controversy lies ahead about which values, if any, schools should promote, and aids in understanding the immense popularity presently enjoyed by an approach to values education that, at least on the surface, appears to be morally neutral.

That approach is the focus of this paper. Called "Values Clarification," this method offers the educator a multitude of classroom activities claiming to teach students a way of exploring the origin, strength, and consequences of the values they hold, and to not promote any specific values in the process.

There can be no question that these procedures are in widespread use. There are over 15 publications presently in print on the topic, and workshops on Values Clarification are well attended.

In light of these claims and this popularity, several questions need to be asked: What are the assumptions underlying this approach? How systematic are its methods and how effective is it? What is its moral philosophy and what values, if any, are being promoted by it? I hope to answer these questions here.

A few comments about the organization of this paper may assist the reader. The first has to do with the sources I've drawn upon to comprehend and outline the theory of Values Clarification (hereafter referred to as "VC"). While there has been a proliferation of articles and volumes devoted to the methods of VC, it is difficult to find definitive recent works on the theory underlying the method. In discussions with advocates of the approach, there have been complaints that articles criticizing the theory base their complaints on out-dated VC literature, but there is very little new theoretical literature to take its place. The most recent major publication in this field, Personalizing Education: Values Clarification and Beyond (Howe & Howe, 1975), gives only one page under the heading "What is Values Clarification?" and remarks that for a detailed discussion of the VC approach, one should "consult Values and Teaching by Raths, Harmin, and Simon or Readings in Values Clarification by Kirschenbaum and Simon (p. 19)." This is troublesome; the first book is 10 years old and the second contains only one theoretical article representing material not found in the first. Nonetheless, for a basic understanding of the VC theory of valuation, we must turn to these sources.

A second point of orientation has to do with two central issues which a theory of practice must address. Since VC is a set of method designed to help students "arrive at values (Raths, et. al., 1966, p. 10)," it is a theory of how to change people. The thorough analysis of such a theory

must account for both how people come to be the way they are, i.e., to have--or lack--their values, and the consequences of this, plus account for a means of augmenting and/or altering these processes (McKnight, 1972). In other words, theories of method include propositions about which behaviors are preferred and why, and propositions about the most effective ways to bring these behaviors to pass. Each of these aspects of VC theory will be discussed.

The final point of orientation has to do with the claim on the part of VC theorists that their theory of valuation has its roots in the work of John Dewey. A thorough analysis of the method, then, must note agreements with and departures from this seminal theory as well as point out the attempt or lack of attempt of its offspring to resolve inconsistencies and/or omissions of the parent scheme. An attempt is made to do this.

My intent in the following section is to present the VC theory as accurately and impartially as I can. Critical analysis of the theory follows in Section III. Those already familiar with the theory of VC may wish to skip Section II entirely.

II. ESSENTIALS OF THE THEORY AND ITS FUNDAMENTAL TERMS

A. The Definition of "Values" and Traditional Ways of Developing Them

Noting the confusion regarding what constitutes a "value" Raths and his associates* offer a definition which "is closest to ones used by those who talk of the process of valuing, rather than of a value in any identifiable institutional sense (p. 10)," believing it more useful to focus on how a

*For convenience, when "Raths" or "Raths and his associates" is referred to, the reference is to Raths, Harmin & Simon, 1966.

person chooses to relate to the environment than to identify what that person thinks important at any given time. A passage from their book will set out their definition of value in operational terms and simultaneously reveal the hoped-for outcome of their approach:

> There is an assumption in our value theory and the teaching strategies that grow from it that humans <u>can</u> arrive at values by an intelligent process of choosing, prizing, and behaving. At least we assume that humans can arrive at <u>something</u> via that process and, with some support in the literature, we prefer to call that something "values." That assumption (which may seem essentially semantic) need not unduly bother the practical-minded classroom teacher, however, for operationally, the assumption is transformed into a hypothesis of a different order: If children are helped to use the valuing process of this book, we assert that they will behave in ways that are less apathetic, confused, and irrational and in ways that are more positive, purposeful, and enthusiastic (pp. 10-11, their emphasis).

The "support in the literature" which they refer to is primarily the writing of John Dewey and his Theory of Valuation (1939), a contextual/behavioral theory of valuation which holds that values are formed through a process of desire, foresight, deliberation and action. For Raths, and again like Dewey, it is fruitless to speak of values except as they are reflected in behavior: "it is less important to know that a person values something than it is to know how he arrived at that 'value' (Raths, p. 206)."

Raths' comprehension of modern life is that an array of choices is available in a complexity never previously matched. Children are more sophisticated and less provincial, but they often lack the skills in making responsible life-choices. At the same time, contradictions face all of us in these times: liberty and justice is for all, but only those who can afford the best attorneys get fair shakes; education is important, yet only the degree seems to matter; and one should support the disadvantaged, while it is apparent that one should "pull oneself up by the bootstraps." Combined with the increasing reluctance of schools to promote any values at all, this leaves

children apathetic, confused, and irrational, and with an "unclear relationship to society." The child who is positive, purposeful, and enthusiastic is the child who is able to engage in an "intelligent process of choosing" from this array, and whose relationship to society is then clear.

Traditional approaches to the development of values in children are cited in the Raths volume and their deficiencies noted: Modeling refers to setting an example for children about proper conduct, persuasion to presenting convincing arguments for a point of view or bit of behavior, limiting choices to offering children an illusion of alternatives among courses of action along a restricted range, inspiring to dramatic or emotional pleas for the value by respected persons, and rules and regulations to the process of molding a set of values simply by virtue of their being engaged in and because one "must". Other traditional means of developing values have to do with cultural or religious dogma in which values are taken on simply because others in the environment believe it without questioning it, and the method of appeals to conscience in which the child is caused to feel guilty if he doesn't accept a particular point of view or engage in certain behaviors.

The authors point out that they have no question that some of these methods may be effective even today, but their utility was greater when the array of life choices was limited and when fears of ex-communication and parental disapproval were greater. But there is another complaint: these methods represent the uncritical acceptance of values, negating the criterion in the above definition that values must be chosen freely after thoughtful consideration of their consequences.

B. The VC Method of Acquiring Values

According to VC theory, those persons who acquire values intelligently are those persons "who can see through other people's foolishness," "not be taken in by smooth talkers," those who "seem to get a large picture of what's good and beautiful and right, and to know what's wrong," and those who are "less vulnerable to fads (Simon and deSherbinin, 1975, p. 681)." In a word, they are self-directed.

Precisely what is this process of intelligent choosing? It is important to note that when this process is specified, the VC definition of value is detailed even further, for as quoted from Raths, "A look at this process may make clear how we define a value. Unless something satisfies all seven of the criteria noted below, we do not call it a value . . . Collectively, they describe the process of valuing (p. 28, their emphasis)."

1. CHOOSING FREELY. If valuation is to result, coercion must be absent. Values must be freely chosen if they are to be "owned" by the person.

2. CHOOSING FROM ALTERNATIVES. Only when there is more than one alternative from which to choose can a value result. One can legitimately claim to value chocolate eclairs but not to value eating.

3. CHOOSING AFTER THOUGHTFUL CONSIDERATION OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF EACH ALTERNATIVE. This refers to weighing the outcomes of each of several possible courses of conduct.

4. PRIZING AND CHERISHING. If we really value something, we esteem it, hold it dear, etc. If we are choosing between several undesirable alternatives, the result is not a value. Values are what we really like.

5. AFFIRMING. A true value is one we would gladly affirm in a conversation when asked or perhaps champion it before a group. If we are ashamed of a choice, it isn't a value.

6. ACTING UPON CHOICES. Our values show up in aspects of our lives. The person who claims to have a value but never does anything with it or about it does not really have a value.

7. REPEATING. Values tend to have a repeating quality in our life. If we really value something, we will not only act on it, but we will act on it repeatedly.

These seven sub-processes or criteria can be subsumed under the headings of

"choosing," "prizing," and "acting."

For the values clarifiers, not everything is a value. There are other things which reflect values but which may be value-free, i.e., they may not meet the seven criteria. These are known as "values indicators." Some of them are goals or purposes, attitudes, feelings, beliefs, worries and obstacl Scrutiny will reveal whether or not they are actually values.

Implicit in this discussion is the notion that this valuation process is itself a value of the authors. They seem to have traversed all seven steps in their scheme. For them, this is the picture of rational living, and this is what one ought to do. This is stated clearly in the Raths volume when it is asked "what . . . does one <u>do</u> if one wants to take on the problem of helping children develop values (p. 38)?" The answer is that teachers will encourage children to make choices and make them freely, help them discover alternatives, encourage reflection on what is prized, give them opportunities to affirm their values, encourage action on choices, and help them examine patterns of behavior for the implicit values. The teacher's task is to encourage the process of valuing, and the intent of the process is to help children clarify for themselves what they value. To quote from <u>Values and Teaching</u>:

> This approach is very different from trying to persuade children to accept some predetermined set of values. It is based on a conception of democracy that says persons can learn to make their own decisions. It is also based on a conception of humanity that says human beings hold the possibility of being thoughtful and wise and that the most appropriate values will come when persons use their intelligence freely and reflectively . . . (Raths, p. 39).

If these are the principal assumptions of VC, there is another as well. This is embodied in Raths' statement that "values are personal things if they exist at all (p. 39)." By this is meant that since we develop our values

through our experiences, they are not just a matter of truth or falsity that can be verified through academic authority. Therefore, it is not appropriate for users of the method to suggest that a child's value-laden statements are ill-advised or wrong. To do so is to ask that the child deny his or her own life experiences, to be a hypocrite; afterall, these attitudes and so on have grown out of his or her encounters with the environment. This also has political implications: the Constitution guarantees the right of every individual to hold the views and values they choose. Teachers, however, "may be authoritative in those areas that deal with truth and falsity. . . we may raise questions about his or her values , but we cannot 'Lay down the law' about what a child's values should be (Raths, p. 37)."

The following passage from Raths will reveal VC's own value stance, its treatment goals, if you prefer:

> We believe that in a world that is changing as rapidly as ours, each child must develop habits of examining his purposes, aspirations, attitudes, feelings, etc., if he is to find the most intelligent relationship between his life and the surrounding world, and if he is to make a contribution to the creation of a better world (p. 37).

The preceding is a summary of the VC theory of values development, its principal assumptions and methodological goals. What, then, are the methods used to implement it?

Although current VC methods seem to be leaving their technique behind, the original major strategy advanced by Raths and his associates was "the clarifying response." Consisting of such questions as "Is that something you prize?" , "Did you consider any alternatives?" , and "Do you <u>do</u> anything about that idea?" , the goal of this method is to "raise questions in the mind of the student, to prod him gently to examine his life, his actions, and his ideas, with the expectation that some will want to use this prodding as an opportunity to clarify their understandings, purposes, . .

and so on (p. 80)." All of this questioning should take place in an atmosphere of positive acceptance where judgements on the parts of students and teachers are absent.

This is a key point in VC methodology. A climate of trust and respect is vital to the effectiveness of the method in that the student, it is believed, will do the clearest thinking when his or her value productions are exposed to the light of critical analysis instead of disparagement or agreement by fellow students or teacher. Because of this, much of VC literature consists of strategies designed to increase careful listening and respect.

By now, there are dozens of published strategies for helping students become aware of their values and to experience each of the seven valuing processes. These methods are novel, easy to use, and fun for the students. Typical strategies are "value sheets" (cut out magazine pictures at the top and value-related questions at the bottom), "like lists" (listing favorite activities and coding them in various ways), and "alternatives and consequences search" (in which several of each are examined.)

In summary, values clarification is a method of values education which proffers an alternative to traditional, ineffective approaches. As a method it seeks to develop in its consumers "an experimental attitude toward life (Harmin & Simon, 1973, p. 12)," and an attitude toward value questions that treats them like other questions--with rational consideration of both personal and social consequences. In this sense, it attempts to promote seven valuing skills vs. any hard and fast specific values. The result of VC is that students will be more purposeful, more productive, have sharpened critical thinking skills and have better relationships with each other (Simon & deSherbinin, 1975, pp. 680-681), as well as be enthusiastic, proud, and fully

nctioning (Raths).

I. CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE VC THEORY OF VALUATION

VC theorists are far less interested in the concrete values a person lds than in the process by which they are attained. Their definition thus operational in that they attempt to set out the means by which e obtains values and/or detects their existence. If one has met all ven criteria, one has a value; if not, one does not have a value.

At the same time, however, the name of this approach is values arification, leaving us in an awkward position when the suggestion is de that some people may not have any values at all (e.g., by Howe & we, 1975, p. 17), yet if these persons are engaged in VC they will be rifying their values. This odd state of affairs can come about from one both of two different sources: either there is a hidden definition of e word "value," or the name of the approach is misleading. It seems me that both are the case. This section addresses itself to this neral arguement.

A. The VC Definition of "Value"

The term value is used by Raths synonymously with "beliefs," "purses," "attitudes," "guides," "activities," and "feelings," with the alification that these must first have met the valuing criteria. The arification in VC has to do with discovering, apparently, whether these pects of a person are values at all. If it can be demonstrated that they e values, there is no real need to cover the seven processes again as lues already exist. The noteworthy point here is that it is only when value is not really a value that VC needs to take place. The stuff of

real interest to the VC practitioner are not values, but rather, using their term, "value indicators;" "expressions which approach values, but which do not meet all of the criteria (Raths, p. 30)." The purpose of this approach is not so much the clarification of values as it is the building or development of values from values indicators.

Without doubt, VC theorists would loudly protest the suggestion that the approach ought to be renamed "Values Promotion," but there is merit in the statement.

Part of the difficulty in determining just what VC refers to stems from--ironically--its very stringent definition of values, a set of specifications so rigid that is is hard to imagine developing "values" in circumstances other than a VC session. For example, in his critique of VC, Lockwood (1975) labels the distinction between values and values indicators as "'needlessly arbitrary,' since it rules out of the realm of value much human experience which we may wish to construe in value terms (p. 37)," such as aspects of our upbringing, and so on. Even if we accept the Deweyan conception of value as that which is preceded by some deliberation, to suggest that only that is a value which is freely chosen from desirable alternatives, publicly affirmed, and so on, is to border on a practice that John Dewey found horrifying; the "violation of the integrity of language (Dewey, 1941, p. 8)." In short, the VC definition of value adds so many qualifications to what we normally think of as a value as to begin to make it sound like something else. Are the VC proponents saying that others may have values, but clients of VC have real values?

It may seem unfair to resist the operational definition of a theory's pivotal term. After all, discussion has to begin somewhere, and other theories would do well to be this explicit. Still, there are characteristics

of the definition which are exceptionally troublesome and, on inspection, are not clear at all. Each aspect of the theory will be illuminated and critiqued in turn, and similarities and deviations from John Dewey's work noted.

1. The Criterion of CHOOSING: freely, from alternatives, after considering consequences of each alternative.

When one first reads Raths' criteria of value, it seems refreshing. In education, one is not used to theories setting out precisely what is being discussed, but here is a theory specifying actual criteria. After careful study, however, one becomes aware that these criteria are illusionary.

Howard Kirschenbaum, the only VC author to my knowledge to have taken even mild exception to Raths' work, observes that a criterion is, by definition, a standard against which something is to be evaluated, and that "In the case of Raths' seven criteria for a value, this principle does not apply (1973, p. 96)." He goes on to raise questions such as the number of alternatives that must be considered, how long we must consider each one, how we can determine whether or not we are truly "free," and so on. Just raising the questions makes it clear that these "criteria" do not do their job.

Dewey's theory of valuation may have foundered on its inability to specify a procedure by which ultimate values are developed. The same problem can be raised in connection with VC, but with more force. While Dewey may not have dealt with this issue sufficiently, VC doesn't seem to have dealt with the issue at all. Stated succintly, the issue is: "Even if we have an array of alternatives before us, and each of them carefully considered and their consequences known, how do we know which alternative to select?" The answer, of course, is not an easy one, but not one

to be avoided by a theory of valuation.*

An additional point needs to be made about the criterion of choosing. The statement to follow appears within the context of Raths' remarks on prizing and cherishing: "In our definition, values flow from choices that we are glad to make (p. 29)." It is hard to know what is more outrageous. To say that we can have values only when we have chosen from an array of attractive alternatives, is to say that we can't have values, say, of self-sacrifice. It would be stretching the point to say that new parents are glad to rise in the night to attend an infant, but it is clear that most value this activity.

2. The Criterion of PRIZING: prizing and cherishing and affirming publicly

Kirschenbaum's (1973) criticism of Raths' criteria holds for prizing as well. The useful criterion here will help us answer "How proud must I be. Is merely being pleased all right? Must I always publicly affirm? Can I avoid public affirmation if I will be harmed because of my values (p. 96)? There is nothing in the VC literature to help us answer these questions. Aside from Kirschenbaum's article, I don't know of a single place where they are even asked.

The VC view of public affirmation represents a substantial departure from Dewey's theory of valuation. Dewey went as far as to say, "if you want to know what a man's values are do not ask him. One is rarely aware, with any high degree of perception, what are the values that govern one's conduct (1941, p. 8)." The avowed link with Dewey is an exaggeration in this area to

* For further discussion of this and other aspects of Dewey's theory of valuation, see the author's "John Dewey's Theory of Valuation: Review and Appraisal," unpublished manuscript, available upon request by writing to R.L. McKnight, PEP Dept., 6th floor Ritter Annex, Temple University, Phila. Pa., 19122.

say the least.

3. The Criterion of ACTING: acting repeatedly upon choices

This criterion has generated more criticism than either of the others. Kirschenbaum (1973) asks , "how many times must I act before I've 'actualized' my value? And how many inconsistencies am I allowed before I flunk the test of its being a pattern in my life (p. 96)?" Once again, Raths' criterion is not a criterion at all; what should help us determine whether we have a value, in fact, does not.

VC theory does not help us determine what action is entailed by a value. Lockwood (1975) uses the example of possible differing values on abortion: one person may favor it, the other be violently opposed, yet both may value "life" and "freedom." Both values may be clarified, but support divergent conduct. This puts VC in the precarious position of asserting that the same value can further contradictory and antagonistic behaviors. Lockwood correctly notes that this effectively nullifies the claim that VC provides clear and consistent guides to conduct.

In a related criticism, Lockwood remarks that the insistence of VC theory on consistent, repeated action is arbitrary in that it neglects dealing with the commonplace situation in which we trade off one value for another. For example, one might have a clarified value on the right of individual privacy, but be willing to deny this right under certain conditions, say, of national security. In light of the frequency with which such trade-offs occur, the lack of theory dealing with this seems inexcusable. It is difficult to anticipate how advocates of VC might respond to this criticism, but I'm confident the response would reveal that in such cases, the "value" in question would have to be pushed back to some other higher order principle of conduct, for example, justice or security, which would then be the arbiter of the conflict.

Just as there must be some theory relating to when it is appropriate to publicly affirm (or, indeed, why one must do so at all!), there must be some theory relating when it is appropriate to act, and a corresponding extention of the definition of value to include something of the nature of "hierarchy" of values, such as "primary" and "secondary" levels so on.

The similarities and differences between VC theory and Dewey's theory in this area are interesting. VC's insistence on action closely follows Dewey's conception of valuation (for Dewey, valuation results in action), but the two theories part company on the requirement of repeated action. In the bulk of his writing on the subject, Dewey spoke of valuation as the deciding of specific problem-solving actions in specific problematic circumstances. He also acknowledged, however, that human beings develop and act on "generalized ideas of ends and values(1939, p. 44)," which may result in deliberate, repeating modes of behavior, but submitted that these generalizations should also be subject to deliberation and critical scrutiny. My point in mentioning this is that it is never made clear in VC theory whether -- to use Dewey's terms-- the clarification in values clarification is of one's values or one's generalizations. A glance at the VC strategies makes apparent that VC mushes together both values--as reasoned responses to a given problematic situation--and the broader generalizations or principles from which they may come.

In this connection, one remembers the term "pattern" which is used frequently in the methodological (as opposed to the theoretical) literature of VC. While, to my knowledge, it is never explicitly defined, it seems clear that this term refers to more-or-less enduring sets of behaviors which are value-reflective. By browsing through a collection of VC strategies, one discovers such activities as "Alternative Action Search," an activity enabling

"students to consider alternatives for action in various specific situations (Simon, et. al., 1972, p. 198 emphasis mine)," and "Alternatives Search" an activity "dealing with general values issues and life situations (Simon, et. al., 1972, p. 193 emphasis mine)." The intent in citing these exercises isn't so much to criticize the methods of VC as to illuminate its hazy definition of just what the term value refers to. Thus far, the VC literature has not speculated on the functional differences between value and pattern nor their connection with each other.

The last point I will make in connection with the criterion of acting is that the VC insistence that one act repeatedly and consistently on one's values would appear to limit one to a very small set of values, if it is the case that action on them requires time and energy. Can one really act repeatedly on all of the values embodied in, say, the Bill of Rights? This is not just picking nits; it is not at all obvious by this criterion whether someone who devotes his or her life to the cause of racial equality could be said to have this as a value,while those of us who claim it, but have not marched in a demonstration, do not.

B. The Method of Values Clarification

To this point, I have critiqued the VC definition and theory of valuation. I will now focus my attention on its theory of practice.

Coombs (1971) outlines four possible objectives of values education: 1) to teach that some value object is to be given a particular value status; 2) to help students make the most rational, defensible value judgements possible about given value objects; 3) to equip students with the capacity and inclination for rational value judgements; and 4) to teach students to

operate as members of a group attempting to come to a common judgement about a value object. It is abundantly clear that VC attempts to avoid the first objective, and since the focus of the method is on one's own personal values, it does not attempt the last objective.

It is impossible to tell, of course, just how consumers of VC publications use the individual strategies to reach these objectives, and even if they were used poorly, it would not necessarily be the fault of the creators of the method. But there is evidence that they are used in a non-systematic fashion (e.g., see Howe & Howe, 1975; Kirschenbaum, Harmin, Howe and Simon, 1976; and Stewart, 1975) resulting in students and teachers alike becoming bored with the procedure. This is due in large measure to the failure of VC writers to conceptualize a process for using their methods in such a way that the user knows which kind of activity -- choosing, prizing, acting -- to use when, and how to relate one activity to another. One wonders if there is a relationship between and among strategies or if they're merely a collection of discrete devices. If this weren't enough, there is also evidence that VC is not integrated into the overall curriculum in the many classrooms in which it is used, culminating in a situation that treats VC rather like recess--as just another diversion. The Howes' (1975) attribute this correctly to the fact that "there has been little attempt to articulate just how the valuing process can be made to pervade the total educational process (p. 11)." Even worse, there has been little effort by VC writers to state just how VC is best implemented regardless of whether or not one hopes that it will "pervade the total educational process."

In writing about this condition, Stewart (1975) blames VC for being "superficial," a term he feels is justified because "it deals primarily with the content of values and somewhat with the process of valuing, but ignores the most important aspect of the issue--namely the structure of values and valuing (p. 684, his emphasis)." By this is meant that the

study of the content of value judgements deals with the "what" expressed by an individual, while the structure is the "why" or the underlying cognitive logic on which the content is based.

The point is well taken, being echoed by users of the method who have complained that VC strategies can help in the study of values, but VC lacks emphasis on "how values originate and how they may be changed (Frick, 1973, p. 9)."

All of these problems, I believe, stem not so much from the lack of effective methods of identifying values and values patterns (by now, there are scores of them), but from the previously mentioned failure of VC theorists to draw a distinction between those two terms, to specify their relationship to one another, and to outline a position on how one determines the conditions under which a value will or will not be acted on. The VC proponents would do well to study the work of Coombs (1971) who specified a structure of making value judgements:

> ... anyone making a value judgement commits himself to: 1) a value principle, and 2) a set of facts about the value object which shows that the principle applies to the value object. The facts and the value principle comprise the premises of a deductive argument having the value judgment as its conclusion (p. 14).

The volume from which this is taken (Metcalf, 1971) presents a model of valuing which is orderly, coherent, and systematic. For example, rather than merely stress the consequences of a given act, they teach their students to (a) gather and organize purported facts, (b) assess their truth, and (c) clarify their relevance to the issue in question. After this, the student arrives at a tentative decision and then tests the decision. This is a method of not only making individual value judgements, but also of discovering, building, and changing the value principles upon which one builds one's perception of the world and carries out one's life. These methods would seem

to have a lot to offer each other; the Metcalf model is coherent and encompassing but lacks cleverness, VC is ingenious but is incomplete and confusing.

What is the theory of change that underlies VC? Essentially, the theory claims that if students will learn to progress through a series of sequencial steps of thinking about their values, they will undergo change. This is an over-simplification, but the emphasis is undeniably on the conscious use of the intellect to determine what one should do. There is another way of accounting for value/behavior change in a VC session, however. It can be argued that change in a VC session comes as much from the attempts of the participant to deal with the paradoxical demands of the VC practitioner and from attempts to resolve cognitive dissonance as from anything else.

For example, if the user of the method is asking "clarifying questions," he or she might ask a student the following: "Would you really do that or are you just talking?" "What other possibilities are there?" and/or "How do you know it's right?" (taken from Raths, p. 261). On the surface, these are merely inquiries, but they may also be perceived as (or actually be!) subtle judgements of a student's productions. In fact, there is distinct evidence that these questions are not inquiries at all, but rather, "gentle prods . . . to stimulate a student . . . to choose, prize, and act in ways outlined by the value theory (Raths, p. 55)." It is commonplace knowledge in psychotherapy (e.g., see Haley, 1963) that simply making a person aware of his or her behavior in a given area is an effective way to alter the rate of that particular response. This can be accomplished -- paradoxically -- by merely asking questions about it. If one is asked, "Are you really sure you would do that," enough times, even the most vehement person may well experience doubt.

At the same time, cognitive dissonance likely plays a large part in the

changes wrought by VC. Raths and his colleagues claimed for their method that "after a decision about a course of action has been made, one becomes more certain however uncertain one was in previous moments. The decision-making factor itself seems to give an air of greater certainty to the process (p. 201)." To claim that it is solely a process of deliberate, rational decision-making that makes one certain is simply bad psychology. The work of Festinger (1957) demonstrated that after just about any decision, people "become more certain." The prospect that a poor decision has been made is too painful for most people to consider, thus they resolve any such dissonance by seeking support for their decision in various ways.

Another way in which cognitive dissonance plays a part in VC is by arranging that students find out whether or not they actually behave in ways they claim to behave. A well known experiment by Rokeach (1973) has relevance here. In this study, students were asked to rank the importance for them of several values and then given the factual information that there was a correlation between how one ranked "freedom" and "equality" on this list and various attitudes towards racial integration. This information resulted in long-range behavioral change on the parts of those students who placed freedom several ranks above equality, most of whom even donated money to a civil rights group following the experiment. The essence of this procedure is present in such VC strategies as "20 Things You Love to Do (Simon, et. al., 1972)" in which the student lists favorite pastimes and then the date when they were last accomplished. Invariably, students find that they don't do what they claim to value as often as would warrant calling it a thing "I love to do." There isn't research to support (or refute) this as far as I know, but it is easy to imagine that, like Rokeach's subjects, behavior change results, so that ultimately they do more of what they claim to value, independent of a committment to do so!

Conversely, the processes of cognitive dissonance may limit the amount of behavioral change resulting from a VC strategy, especially if that strategy involves one's sharing a given point of view within a group of people with opposing views. When a person is confronted with a position different from his own in a group of people perceived to be like him, dissonance results (Festinger, 1968). When that person is a teen-ager or an other-directed adult, the resolution of this dissonance may well be a hardening of the original position rather than a further scrutiny of its merit. This is what Frick (1973) was referring to when he wrote: Value clarification frequently becomes value justification (p. 8)," observing that, as a culture, we tend to admire the stance of "courage of convictions" more than "courage to change."

These comments on paradoxical intention and cognitive dissonance are intended to convey one central point: as a method of behavioral change, which VC plainly is, it would do well to study these theories in order to supplement its strategies with and safeguard them from their effects. As we wait for more research on VC, we don't know which variables are the most potent, but these are highly plausible rival alternatives to mere rational thinking.

I have presented in this section what seems to be the principal flaws in the VC theory and methods of change. Of course, there are other criticisms of VC methodology, but it would be pedantic to detail all of them. The interested reader is referred to the sources cited in the body of this paper for further critical analysis. For now, the salient question becomes "What is the moral philosophy underlying VC?"

C. The Moral Philosophy of Values Clarification

VC has probably been subject to more strenous criticism over its moral philosophy than over any other aspect of its theory and methods. Lockwood (1975) recoils from what seems to him to be VC's moral relativism, observing that "VC appears, at least by default, to hold the view that all views are equally valid (p. 46)," basing his remarks on Raths' statements to the effect that values are "personal things" and "are not just a matter of true or false," and that "as teachers, we . . . cannot dictate to children what their values should be (pp. 36-37)."

The stance of the moral relativist is that one ought to do that, and that only, which one thinks one ought to do; the mere having of a certain moral value makes that moral value correct for that person, since there are no objectively "right" and "wrong" moral values. Logically, there are several objections to this view. For one, it is subject to the complaint that it becomes impossible to contend that another person is morally wrong, and leads to the paradoxical consequence of two persons differing about a moral issue yet both being right. For another, the relativistic point of view does not do what a moral point of view is expected to do: guide us in deciding on particular moral questions. Being told to do what I think I ought is of no help if I am confused about what I really think about the situation (Urmson, 1960).

There are important social consequences of relativism, as well. Lockwood (1975) points out that this view can be used to support anything from passivity to facism if, say, one values going along with the crowd or its opposite, believing that one's values are the best and therefore attempting to institute them by force. If one is truly a relativist, neither position will be offensive, as the person in each case is simply doing what he or she believes is right.

Can VC correctly be accused of promoting such a potentially dangerous philosophy? Is it true that VC promotes no values at all or that all values

are equally valid? Stewart's (1975) answer is no, but his view is an even more devastating indictment of the moral philosophy of VC:

> . . . to see Values Clarification as morally or ethically relativistic is to see only half of its very confused philosophy. It purports to believe, on the one hand, that values are personal, situational, individually derived, not amenable to objective evaluation, and relative. It offers, on the other hand, a list of values-based behaviors that are undesirable and objectively inferior and can be cured with Values Clarification. This list . . . contains the following: apathy, flightiness, uncertainty, inconsistency, drifting, overconforming, overdissenting, and role playing. Counterbalancing this list of "vices," of course, would be the corresponding and opposite "virtues". . ., viz., purposefulness, productivity, strong beliefs, thoughtfulness, consideration, zestfulness, manageability, and some others (p. 686).

Stewart's conclusion is that the VC ethical position is so muddled that it deserves a clumsy label: "absolute relativism." This is so because for him, the basic VC ethical premise is "All values statements are relative--except 1) this one and 2) those that are essential for the Values Clarification theory and methodology (p. 686, his emphasis)."

In response to these criticisms, Kirschenbaum and other major VC writers (1976) have written an article entitled "In Defense of Values Clarification" in which they ask the question "Is Values Clarification 'Value Free'? Is It 'Relativistic'? (p. 3)." Their reply is very revealing, and since this is an as yet unpublished manuscript, I quote from it at some length.

> . . .the value clarifying teacher or parent accepts all viewpoints and does not try to impose his or her own views. . .In that sense, the approach is "value free," and we can honestly say to parents that we are not trying to impose any set of values, but rather teach a valuing process. In that sense, it is also "relativistic." Responses are not judged as better or worse; each student's views are treated with equal respect.
>
> But here the relativism stops. No matter what their viewpoint, all students are asked further clarifying questions. All are encouraged to keep developing their values through use of the valuing process. And it should be clear from the process that values clarification definitely promotes the value of choosing, prizing and acting or if one prefers, thinking, feeling, choosing, communicating and acting. Thinking critically is regarded as better than thinking non-critically. Considering consequences is regarded

as better than choosing impulsively or thoughtlessly. Choosing freely is considered better than yielding passively to authority or peer pressure (pp. 3-4, their emphasis).

Later in the same article, these authors write:

> Toward what end are these valuing processes better than their counterparts? Here, again, there are certain value judgements implicit in each process. If we urge critical thinking, then we value rationality. If we promote divergent thinking, then we value creativity. If we support moral reasoning. . .we value justice. If we uphold free choice, then we value autonomy or freedom. If we encourage "no-lose" conflict resolution, then we value equality (p. 4, their emphasis).

Need I point out that there is a glaring contradiction here? On the one hand, VC claims that it is "not trying to impose any set of values," yet on the other, it explicitly sets forth a set of values which it asserts to be "better than" other values, owning up in the process that "values clarification definitely promotes" them! How can the values clarifiers "accept all viewpoints" while promoting values which may well rival those of their consumers? Viewed in this way, "acceptance" of "all viewpoints" must amount to little more than condescending tolerance; if the VC practitioner asks enough clarifying questions, the theory seems to go, the person whose values differ from those of VC will see the light and change, accepting the "better" values. It is just absurd to state that some values are better than others and then to claim that all views will be respected.

That Kirschenbaum and his colleagues (1976) announce that VC is in the business of promoting values, and that "values clarification is not and never has been 'value free' (p. 4)," should not come as a surprise. Ten years earlier, Raths wrote, "it is entirely possible that children will choose not to develop values. It is the teacher's responsibility to support this choice, also, while at the same time realizing that values development is likely to be one of the goals of the school . . .(p. 47)." This is further evidence that the VC motto might be "All values are equal, but some are more equal

than others."

Upon what authority does VC claim that its values are better than others? Their answer to this question is characteristic of the fuzziness of their moral philosophy. On the one hand, they report (in Kirschenbaum, et.al., 1976) that this claim cannot be supported by any conventional means, and on the other, claim that "if people use the process, they will experience more positive value in their living and will be more constructive in the social context (p. 4)." It is difficult to decipher this confusing sentence, but the contention appears to be that since this process leads to certain results (a dubious claim as there is little reliable documentation), the process should be used. This brings Hume's remark to mind--"No ought from an is"--and begins a new round of debate: simply because something has a given effect does not make it "good."

Part of the difficulty, I believe, that VC authors and their critics have had in communicating with each other stems from the fact that VC has less to do with the clarification or even the promotion of values than with behavior change. VC is in the business of encouraging purposefulness, enthusiasm, and productivity, while combating apathy, listlessness, uncertainty, having a priori made the assumption that these behaviors are good and bad, respectively. Thus, VC is a process of nurturing, fostering, furthering and supporting certain types of responses, as is behavior modification or client-centered therapy. To VC writers, then, there is no real need for debate about such issues as relativism and other moral issues--they are "simply" (and surreptitiously!) championing their own pet beliefs! They seem to ask, "Who could possibly take exception to such homey values as choosing, prizing, and acting?"

If this is true, why do these writers disclaim other means of values development, particularly moralizing? At first blush, it would appear that the VC literature criticizes moralizing because it is unjust and inhumane to do so. Yet if one looks closer, one becomes concerned that this method isn't eschewed so much on moral grounds (i.e., moralizing is bad) as on pragmatic grounds (Stewart, 1975). This statement by Simon and deSherbinin (1975) is illustrative: "Moralizing offers the illusion of looking like the right way to go, but its whole focus--trying to shape and manipulate people into accepting a given set of values--is doomed to failure (p. 682)." VC indeed attempts to "shape and manipulate" the thinking of individuals and even specifies the kind of thinking of individuals and resulting behavior it wants, advancing volumes of strategies to do this on the pragmatic grounds that these are much more effective than mere moralizing. It is embarrassing to have to say so again, but there is a difference between saying something "works" and saying it is "right." No, VC doesn't tell students how they should spend their Saturday afternoons, but there can be no question that it tells them how they should make this decision and act on it once they've decided.

A related point concerns VC's basic social conservatism. In years past, parents could rely on institutions such as the schools and the church to promote given values. These methods are no longer very effective for a multitude of reasons. If the same values were to be encouraged today, new and different means would have to be developed that do not have the heavy-handed flavor of such approaches, and even give the appearance of being tolerant of all points of view--young people simply won't sit still for anything less. VC is that new method. Its solution is an approach that defines "value" so

tightly that to satisfy the criteria, one has to take on the same basic values* championed by the Boy Scouts and Sunday School in the process! If this is not true, how can this statement by Simon and deSherbinin (1975) be interpreted differently:

> Values clarifiers believe, however, that people who go through the process of deciding what they value will in the end reflect the ways one would hope, in any event, all good teachers would behave (p. 682).

Heretically, I must raise a question: why not, if one is going to promote values at all, encourage non-rational or at least extra-rational approaches to life's problems? Where is the evidence, scientific or otherwise, that a structured approach to valuation is any better than any other approach? Where is the evidence that even a systematic approach to rational problem-solving is rational at its core? A recent non-fictional volume devoted itself to the assertion that the act of identifying problems, generating proposed solutions, and choosing among them is not, and cannot be, rational at all (Pirsig, 1975)!

My last comment on the moral philosophy of VC will simply be a question: While they aren't to be villified (after all, I am one!), why, should teachers be held up as the model of hoped-for behavior.

IV CONCLUSION

On the barn wall of George Orwell's fictional Animal Farm was written, "All animals are created equal, but some animals are more equal than others." This absurd proposition was intended by Orwell to illustrate the extent to which people are able to fool themselves and manipulate others by misusing language. Given the right qualifications, the most benign claim can be subtly

---

* specifically, those in the quotations on p. 26.

twisted to mean its opposite.

In intellectual pursuits, this practice usually has one of two sources. It sometimes stems from sloppy thinking and poor scholarship, thus inadvertently blocking the growth of knowledge in the process. At its worst, it is a devious way of attempting to promote one thing while appearing to promote another, resulting in intellectual tyranny.

One sometimes encounters a hybrid form, however. In the fields of education and psychotherapy, enterprises involving persons assisting others, there is great temptation to press one's values on others, often without realizing one is doing so and/or while claiming not to. Thomas Szasz (1970) called this "bootlegging humanistic values." The intentions behind the practice are honorable, but oddly, non-humanistic because the very values being advanced are not often apparent to the advocate, much less to the recipient. In my view, VC is one such form of "humanistic" deception.

In its present form, VC actively, yet surrepticiously, promotes, furthers, and expedites a distinct set of values without a satisfactory rationale for doing so, and what is worse, it does this in the bulk of its writings while denying that it is doing so.

This is no small matter. The very purpose of education is to hammer at the walls of ignorance and light the corners of illusion . Yet Values Clarification does neither as long as it persists in employing clever but disconnected activities which have as their over-arching purpose the advancement of a pet collection of virtues called "criteria" or "processes." In the act of doing this, it does violence to its own name and to the field of values education in general.

As a teaching tool, VC does have merit. The activities are fun and revealing, and the theory has renewed awareness of the importance of values education. I submit, however, that the name "Values Clarification" is misleading. It

should be called something on the order of Values Development, and its technology be greatly strengthened. Anything with such broad commercial appeal is not likely to change overnight, but it is the responsibility of VC authors to acknowledge that their method has more kinship with, say, psychotherapy than with what is normally thought of as values education. This bit of semantic clarity would have the effect on VC of aligning it with a host of influence processes which, even though we may disagree with them, tell us clearly what they are up to. It would be courageous and responsible to do this, and may even renew debate about our most cherished but, perhaps, limiting assumptions about intelligent conduct, a state of affairs that would doubtlessly have pleased John Dewey himself.

REFERENCES

Coombs, J.R. "Objectives of Value Analysis," in L.E. Metcalf (ed.), Values Education. Wash., D.C.: National Council for the Social Studies, 1971 (41st Yearbook).

Dewey, J. Theory of Valuation. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939.

Dewey, J. "The Basic Values and Loyalties of Democracy." American Teacher. Vol. 25:9, May, 1941.

Festinger, L. Theory of Cognitive Dissonance. Evanston, Ill.: Row, Peterson, 1957.

Festinger, L. "Arousal and Reduction of Dissonance in Social Contexts," in D. Cartwright and A. Zander (eds.), Group Dynamics. New York: Harper & Row, 1968.

Frick, R. "Values: Games are Not Enough." Teacher. 91:4, 1973.

Haley, J. Strategies of Psychotherapy. New York: Grune & Stratton, 1963.

Harmin, M. & S. B. Simon. "Values," in S. B. Simon & H. Kirschenbaum (eds.), Readings in Values Clarification. Minneapolis, Minn.: Winston Press, 1973.

Howe, L. & M. Howe. Personalizing Education: Values Clarification and Beyond. New York: Hart, 1975.

Kirschenbaum, H. "Beyond Values Clarification," in S. B. Simon & H. Kirschenbaum (eds.), Readings in Values Clarification. Minn., Minn.: Winston Press, 1973.

Kirschenbaum, H., Harmin, M., Howe, L. and S. B. Simon. "In Defense of Values Clarification." Unpublished manuscript, 1976.

Lockwood, A. L. "A Critical View of Values Clarification." Teachers College Record. Vol. 77, No. 1, Sept., 1975.

McKnight, R. L. The Language and Process of Psychotherapy: Rationale for and Ingredients of a Scientifically Based Practice. Seattle, Wash.: Univ. of Washington. Unpublished Master's thesis, 1972.

McKnight, R. L. "John Dewey's Theory of Valuation: Review and Appraisal." Unpublished manuscript, 1976.

Metcalf, L.E. (ed.) Values Education. Wash., D.C.: National Council for the Social Studies, 1971 (41st Yearbook).

Pirsig, R. Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance. New York: Bantam Books, 1975.

Raths, L. E., Harmin, M. & S. B. Simon. Values and Teaching. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1966.

Rokeach, M. "Persuasion That Persists," in S.B. Simon & H. Kirschenbaum (eds.), Readings in Values Clarification. Minn., Minn.: Winston Press, 1973.

Simon, S. B., Howe, L. W. & H. Kirschenbaum. Values Clarification: A Handbook of Practical Strategies for Teachers and Students. New York: Hart, 1972.

Simon, S.B. & H. Kirschenbaum (eds.). Readings in Values Clarification. Minneapolis, Minn.: Winston Press, 1973.

Simon, S. B. "Sidney Simon's Response." Phi Delta Kappan. 56:10, June, 1975, p. 688.

Simon, S.B. & P. deSherbinin. "Values Clarification: It Can Start Gently and Grow Deep." Phi Delta Kappan. 56:10, June,1975.

Stewart, J. S. "Clarifying Values Clarification: A Critique." Phi Delta Kappan. 56:10, June, 1975.

Szasz, T. "Bootlegging Humanistic Values Through Psychiatry," in Szasz, T., Ideology and Insanity. Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1970.

Urmson, J. O. (ed.). "Relativism," in The Concise Encycolpedia of Western Philosophy and Philosophers. New York: Hawthorn, 1960.

Woodward, K. L. & Lord, M. "Moral Education," Newsweek, March 1, 1976.

Richard McKnight feels strongly about two things: that unless you can say something nice, don't say anything at all, and that the work of practitioners and theorists of any method ought to be criticized harshly and often. This creates conflicts in him, and serves as a stimulus to others.

Having obtained the Master's degree in social work in 1972, he has practiced - and criticized - psychotherapy and educational consultation since. He is presently teaching psychology at Community College of Philadelphia, and at Temple University, is Co-director of the Center for the Study of Psychoeducational Processes, and studying for the doctorate in educational psychology.